

Iowa Outdoors
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.gov

Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653
mick.klemesrud@dnr.iowa.gov

April 22, 2008

1. DNR Netting Efforts Fill State Walleye Hatcheries Fish Crews Report Better Than Average Spring Run – by Lowell Washburn [electronic photo available]
2. Campers Get Ready for Prime Camping Season
3. Section of Silver Creek Off Limits to Trout Anglers
4. Spring Weather Has ATV Riders Ready to Hit the Trails
5. White Pelicans are Guaranteed Crowd Pleasers – by Lowell Washburn [electronic photos available]
6. Iowans Encouraged to Celebrate Earth Week
7. Prairie Rescue Events Set for April 26
8. DNR to Host Public Meeting April 29 on Proposed Wildlife Rules

**DNR NETTING EFFORTS FILL STATE WALLEYE HATCHERIES
FISH CREWS REPORT BETTER THAN AVERAGE SPRING RUN**

By Lowell Washburn
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Nets have been set, adult brood fish captured, millions of eggs collected. For DNR fisheries workers, the spring walleye run has concluded.

By now, all of those impressive adult brood fish have been safely returned to their home waters. All of those precious walleye eggs, however, have stayed behind and are now under the watchful eye of DNR biologists located at the Rathbun and Spirit Lake State Fish Hatcheries.

“It’s really been an excellent year for spring walleye netting,” said DNR Fish Culture Supervisor, Mike Mason. “The timing was right when we started and water temperatures were conducive to good catches. Our hatcheries were able to fill quickly which is good news for Iowa anglers. This year, we have a statewide stocking request for 110 million [walleye] fry and fingerlings. With the hatcheries full, we should easily be able to meet those requests.”

Walleye eggs are expected to begin hatching at the Rathbun Hatchery as early as next Monday, says Mason. Rathbun was the first hatchery to “go on line” this spring. Rathbun fisheries personnel collected 580 quarts of eggs in twelve days of netting. Net crews at Spirit Lake, Storm Lake, and Clear Lake also enjoyed above average success during this year’s walleye campaign.

“Spirit Lake was easily our most improved walleye [brood] fishery,” says North Iowa DNR Fisheries Supervisor, Jim Wahl. “They have a new and very abundant [2001] year class of brood fish that are just coming on line. Those fish are in the twenty-inch range and will contribute to our hatchery program for years to come.”

“At Clear Lake, our walleye brood stock is as healthy as we’ve seen in several years,” added Wahl. “Fish averaged 22-inches, and we’re collecting eggs from at least four separate year classes. The yield from those fish was extraordinary. We stripped 350 walleyes and collected 300 quarts or 40, 500,000 eggs.”

Net crews at Storm Lake collected an additional 170 quarts of eggs.

“The satellite egg collection stations located at Clear Lake and Storm Lake are providing benefits to anglers across the entire state,” said Mason. “The eggs collected at those stations allow us to fill our state hatcheries quickly. The additional data we collect allows biologists to make better decisions regarding long term walleye management.”

As this spring’s walleye hatch continues, the majority of those baby fish will be immediately distributed to public waters across the state. A smaller number of those fry will stay behind to inhabit the protected environment of DNR nursery lakes until late June when they will be stocked as 2 to 3-inch walleye fingerlings.

###

CAMPERS GET READY FOR PRIME CAMPING SEASON

There are some campers who will go camping regardless of the season or the weather, but most will wait for warmer, dryer conditions before heading to the campground. For those who wait, now is a good time to go through the camping gear.

Check the tents and sleeping bags for tears or signs of wear and tent poles for cracks. Make sure all the stakes made it home from the last trip. Go through cooking equipment, fire starters and matches. Check the first aid kit, shower house bag and the supply of bug repellent and sun screen.

“Everyone is excited to get outside to go camping and fishing and to just relax, and spending a few minutes checking over the equipment will make that initial trip

outdoors a good one,” said Kevin Szcodronski, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau.

Check the batteries in the flashlight and the bottles of propane. Pick up an extra set of lantern mantles, just in case. Make sure the cot still functions or the air mattress does not leak. Pack garbage bags, and ponchos and a deck of cards in case it rains. Don’t forget aluminum foil and a can opener.

“With all the new electronic ‘necessities’ our younger campers can not live without, it would be wise to bring a surge protector for cell phones and other games and music players,” Szcodronski said.

Campers can also plan their outings by going online at www.reserveiaparks.com and secure a campsite at their favorite state park. Reservable campsites are getting scarce for Memorial Day and the July 4 holidays. A campsite can be reserved up to three months out. Iowa parks still have half of all campsites available on a first come, first serve basis.

For more information, contact Szcodronski at 515-281-8674.

###

SECTION OF SILVER CREEK OFF LIMITS TO TROUT ANGLERS

A segment of Silver Creek in Allamakee County is now ‘off limits’ for trout anglers. The upper part of Silver Creek, off Hanover Road, north of Waukon, will not be stocked and signs will be posted reminding anglers that it is private property. A new owner for the property has placed the property off limits.

The lower end of Silver Creek, off Sunflower Road, remains open to the public and still is being stocked by crews from the Department of Natural Resources’ Decorah trout hatchery.

###

SPRING WEATHER HAS ATV RIDERS READY TO HIT THE TRAILS

DES MOINES - As nice weather inches closer to becoming the norm, more all-terrain vehicle users will be getting ready to ride.

“Just like the preparation riders go through to get their machines ready for the spring, riders should also review safety equipment and safe riding practices,” said Rhonda Fowler, with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources snowmobile and off-highway vehicle (OHV) program.

Safe riding practices include always wearing a DOT or Snell approved motorcycle helmet. Never ride on a roadway or highway. ATVs are not designed to be ridden on paved surfaces or to share the road with motorized vehicles. Never ride double on a machine designed for one passenger. An additional passenger affects the weight distribution on the machine and greatly affects the driver’s ability to control the machine.

Fowler said there are some common sense rules that riders should also follow. Wear proper safety equipment; youth riders should only ride on properly sized machines for their size and ability. Ride only in designated areas and OHV parks, ride within your ability and know your machine – read the owner’s manual.

“Most crashes occur when a rider is doing something he or she should not be doing, which means they are not practicing safe riding,” she said.

Spending a day in one of Iowa’s numerous OHV parks is a safe and exciting activity for the whole family. “All it takes is a little preparation in the way of safety training, properly sizing a machine for the youngsters and having all the current registrations and user permits for each machine,” said Matt Bruner, conservation officer with the DNR in Webster and Humboldt counties.

For more information about Iowa’s OHV parks, go to www.iowaohv.com

For more information about the Iowa DNR’s safety education program, go to www.iowadnr.gov then click on the Safety Education link under Outdoor Recreation in the navigation bar on the left, or call 515-281-3208 or 515-281-3449.

###

[electronic photo available]

Winged Fishers Invade Iowa

WHITE PELICANS ARE GUARANTEED CROWD PLEASERS

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The spring flight of American white pelicans has arrived in Iowa. From border to border, river to river, these huge water birds are currently visiting ponds, lakes, and reservoirs across the state.

Wherever they assemble, white pelicans are certain to draw a crowd. With massive proportions, snow-white plumage, and unique sword-like bills, there is no denying they represent a stunning bird form.

But it is the species' highly organized communal fishing ventures that draw the most attention. In order to survive, pelicans require large quantities of small fish. Whenever large fish schools are located, it doesn't take long for the word to spread. Within minutes, a foraging pelican flock can grow from less than a dozen individuals to a hundred or more birds. That's when the excitement begins.

As birds organize into a circular rotation, they quickly begin herding fish toward the center ["donut hole"] of the flock. As the noose tightens, fish become densely concentrated and highly confused. The trap springs as each bird simultaneously begins scooping fish into the bottom of its huge pouch-shaped bill. The frenzy only lasts for a minute or two. Once it's over, the birds laboriously rise, fly a short distance, and quickly regroup. The scenario is repeated over and over until the pelicans become gorged or the particular school they're fishing is depleted.

If fish are found in shallow water, white pelicans may employ a U-shaped horseshoe formation and attempt to drive schools into shore or against other solid barriers. This tactic works particularly well with schools of baby bullheads which are one of the pelican's favorite menu items.

###

IOWANS ENCOURAGED TO CELEBRATE EARTH WEEK

DES MOINES — After a long wait, spring is finally here and people are looking for any excuse to get outside. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Keepers of the Land Volunteer Program reminds Iowans to take some time this week to enjoy the outdoors and give thanks for the abundance of our natural beauty.

April 20-26 marks the 38th celebration of Earth Week and Iowans are encouraged to celebrate through a variety of volunteer opportunities offered across the state including:

- **9th annual Statewide Prairie Rescue:** These events provide volunteers with a unique opportunity to assist in the preservation of remnant and recovered prairie. These events occur throughout the state during the month of April.
- **Tree Planting and Distribution Events:** Plant Some Shade and Operation Releaf events are taking place throughout the state during April. Volunteers are needed to assist with various event logistics and set-up.

- **State Parks/Preserves:** State parks and recreation areas are the heart and soul of some of Iowa's most impressive natural treasures and are constantly in need of volunteer assistance. Simply contact a state park or recreation area and ask how you can help.
- **Your Own Project:** Visit a nearby local, county, or state-owned outdoor area, maybe your favorite fishing hole or your dog's favorite place to romp, and pick-up trash or do something else to make a difference. Remember one individual's desire to make a difference is very contagious.

Earth Week began as Earth Day in 1970 as a response to growing ecological concerns in the United States and a call to action to inspire people to observe and protect the environment by giving back to the planet. The day soon grew in popularity and is now observed by hundreds of millions of people in 174 nations worldwide and celebrated during the entire third week of April.

Every day is an opportunity to give back. Visit www.keepersoftheland.org to find out more about celebration opportunities throughout the state.

For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov

###

PRAIRIE RESCUE EVENTS SET FOR APRIL 26

Volunteers of all ages will help with prairie rescue events at Springbrook Conservation Education Center, Hartley Heritage Fen, Humeston Prairie, Cedar Island Wildlife Area, and Whiterock Conservancy on April 26. Please see the links below for details!

The annual prairie rescue events are coordinated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources with support from the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, county conservation boards and private conservation groups.

For a complete listing of all Iowa prairie rescue sites, visit the website at www.inhf.org/prairierescue2008.htm The events are also listed on the Iowa DNR Keepers of the Land events calendar at www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/index.html

Questions may be directed to Whitney Davis of the Iowa DNR at 515-281-6271, or Whitney.Davis@dnr.iowa.gov.

Today, only about 1/1,000th of Iowa's prairie remains. These small prairie remnants, even those in public ownership, are still at risk from encroaching species and the lack of historic fire and grazing patterns.

Prairie Rescue volunteers will clear invasive species such as brush and small trees from the sites. Experts will conduct controlled burns on some of the prairies.

These efforts will allow adults and kids to experience the prairies Iowa's earlier generations saw, while preserving that experience for future generations.

###

Media Contact: Willie Suchy, Supervisor, Wildlife Research Section, Iowa DNR, 515-281-8660.

DNR TO HOST PUBLIC MEETING APRIL 29 ON PROPOSED WILDLIFE RULES

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is hosting a public meeting to discuss a number of new proposed regulations including changes to waterfowl seasons, trapping quotas and seasons, and the wildlife depredation program. The meeting will be conducted over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) on April 29, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

“This is an opportunity for our hunters and people who support wildlife to give us some feedback on these regulations,” said Dale Garner, chief of the DNR's wildlife bureau. “We will go over the proposed regulations and seasons and our rationale behind each change, and take comments from anyone willing to speak, then, if there is any time remaining, we will open the discussion to other topics.”

The proposed changes include removing the 3-day extension to the shotgun deer season and return the late muzzleloader season close date to Jan. 10. The DNR is also proposing changes to the wildlife depredation program to reflect the recommendations from a process improvement event in January. Other topics include proposed waterfowl season and expansion of the bobcat season zone in western Iowa.

Any interested person may make written suggestions or comments on the proposed changes on or before April 29, 2008. Written comments may be sent to the Wildlife Bureau Chief, Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034; or faxed to (515) 281-6794.

The DNR will have staff members from the wildlife bureau at each site to answer questions, and to take any written comments.

ICN Locations:

Ames	Ames High School, 20 th and Ridgewood
Burlington	Burlington High School, 421 Terrace Dr.
Calmar	South Winneshiek High School, 203 W. South St., Room 17
Cedar Falls	Area Education Agency 267, 3712 Cedar Heights Dr.
Cedar Rapids	John F. Kennedy High School, 4545 Wenig Rd. NE, Room 116
Centerville	Centerville National Guard Armory, 22800 Dewey Road, Sign Posted on Hwy. 5
Creston	Green Valley Area Education Agency 14, 1405 N. Lincoln, Turner Room
Davenport	North High School, 626 W. 53 rd St., Room 576
Dubuque	Archdiocesan Pastoral Center, 1229 Mount Loretta, Room B111
Fort Dodge	Fort Dodge High School, 819 N 25 th St., Room 12
Iowa City	Iowa City National Guard Armory, 925 South Dubuque St.
Johnston	Heartland Area Education Agency 11, 6500 Corporate Dr.
Marshalltown	Iowa Valley Community College District 1, 3702 South Center St., Continuing Education Center, Room 806
Mason City	North Iowa Area Community College 1, 500 College Dr., Activity Center, Room 106
Ottumwa	Southern Prairie Area Education Agency 15 – 1, 2814 N Court St.
Red Oak	Southwestern Community College 1, 2300 North 4 th St., Red Oak Center, Room 116
Sioux City	Central Campus Individual Learning Center, 1121 Jackson St., Room 311
Spencer	Iowa Lakes Community College, 1900 N. Grand Ave., Spencer Attendance Center, Fiber Optic Room 118

###

